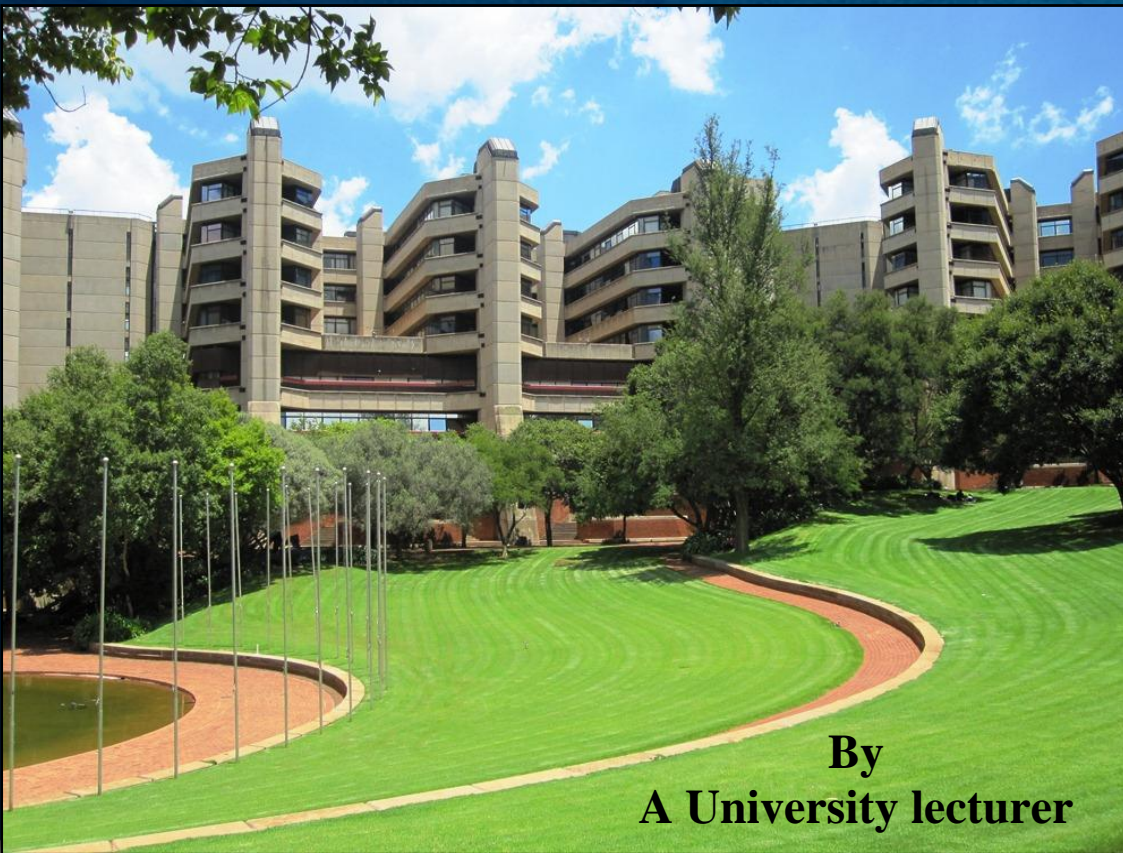


Universities



By
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INTRODUCTION

The article appearing in these pages was written by a “lecturer of one of the leading universities in South Africa.” He highlights the zina culture which dominates university environment and pollutes the university atmosphere. Alhamdulillah, the brother has truthfully portrayed the ugly and morally rotten life which prevails at universities.

Whilst he has correctly presented the ugly scenario, he has not been able to offer the correct Islamic solution since he is not an Aalim of the Deen. Thus, despite the brother having been inside the immoral university cauldron, observing and witnessing the utter moral ruin and Imaani destruction of Muslims, especially females, his western secular indoctrination constrains him to aver: *“The mode of dress, character, greed for money and complete disregard of anything religious are all characteristics of a secular, university environment. **This does not mean that we must boycott all universities.**”* (Our emphasis)

He has no valid solution for the lamentable problems which overwhelm Muslim students, especially females, in the evil, kuffaar, immoral university environment. No one can provide a solution for rectifying the incurable cancerous rot of which a university reeks. A university is rotten to the core. Its rotten stench makes Jahannaum recoil with revulsion.

The one and only Islamic solution is to boycott universities. The degree of immorality and zina which govern university life makes this boycott Waajib. It is not permissible to participate in a venture to gain its benefits, when Akhlaaq and Imaan are ruined in the process. The incumbency to boycott universities is based on the Qur’aanic principle stemming from the following aayat:

“They ask you (O Muhammad!) about liquor and gambling. Tell (them): Therein is great sin and many benefits for mankind. However, their sin is greater than their benefit.”

Confound the benefits of an immoral university which paves the pathway leading to Jahannum. It is never, never permissible for both Muslim females and males to attend a university. The primary objective of life on earth is the quest for Allah’s Pleasure and our salvation in the Aakhirah. It is not intelligent to destroy our everlasting life of happiness of Jannat for the short term miserable benefits of this transitory abode.

When the Mu’min pursues Allah’s Pleasure, worldly loss becomes a necessary corollary. On the contrary, if one pursues the dunya, then loss in the Aakhirah is incumbent. This is according to Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). Therefore, it is Waajib for Muslims to boycott all western universities, and it is *Waajib alal Kifaayah* for the Muslim community to establish its own secular institutions where the spirit of Islam and the ethos of Taqwa will permeate.

MUJLISUL ULAMA OF S.A.

10 Zil Qa’dh 1432
8 October 2011

Universities

MUSLIMS ON CAMPUS

Prologue

I have decided to write this booklet anonymously for two reasons: firstly in order to ensure my sincerity and avoid clouding my intention with that of name or fame. Secondly it gives me the freedom to tackle the difficult issues adequately without reservation with regards to my identity. The sole purpose behind the publication of this booklet is to contribute towards the upliftment of the *iman* of all those brothers and sisters who are attending tertiary institutions. I ask you in advance for forgiveness for any shortcomings in the publication of this work and request that you make dua for me and my family.

I have had the opportunity of completing both my secondary and tertiary education at secular institutions in South Africa. I have also travelled for brief periods overseas in order to complete some postgraduate courses. Lastly, I was fortunate enough to spend a brief period lecturing at a South African university. As such, I feel that I have a good insight into the challenges that face the youth on campuses in our country and hope that this discourse will add some value to our lives.

Summary – Muslims on Campus

Having spent the majority of my life as a member of some secular institution or the other, be it at school or at university, I felt it necessary to communicate some of the challenges the youth at these institutions are facing today. It is my hope that this humble effort will highlight these issues to both students and parents alike so that we can adequately prepare ourselves before treading through such a difficult path.

One of the challenges we face even before setting foot on campus is that our purpose for obtaining an education is clouded. Instead of doing it in order to increase our knowledge so that we may become

Universities

better Muslims or so that we can propagate Islam, we go to university because we place our *yakeen* of *rizq* in our degrees.

Within the university environment our students are faced with a myriad of challenges. Some of them include the open marketing of *zina* and a lifestyle of complete immorality and immodesty. There are absolutely no restrictions on interactions between members of the opposite sex. In fact, they are encouraged to be as friendly and intimate as they wish to be. Unlike the work place, there are no unwritten boundaries of respect between men and women.

On the other hand, one of the most devastating issues plaguing our universities today is the growth of so many organizations that promote *haraam* under the banner of Islam. Whether it is student organizations that are unmindful of basic Islamic issues like *hijaab* or *salaah* or the threat of deviant sects like the Shias or Ahmediya's, our young friends are constantly being misguided. Many of our brothers and sisters are under the impression that they are carrying out acts of *ibadat* when in fact they are indulging in *haraam*.

In short, the campus environment markets a lifestyle that is completely foreign and unIslamic. The mode of dress, character, greed for money and complete disregard of anything religious are all characteristics of a secular, university environment. This does not mean that we must boycott all universities. There is a need in the Muslim *ummah* for us to have educated people. We need to ensure that we are aware, as parents and students, of these challenges and that we lead our lives in such a manner that we are protected from them.

The key ingredient in purifying our lives from such treachery is to become steadfast on our *salaah*. For the males it must be with *jamaat* in a *musjid*, especially while on campus. We are fortunate that most campuses have excellent *salaah* facilities and so there should be no excuse for any neglect. We also need to ensure that we begin lowering our gaze from all forms of *haraam* and that we dissociate ourselves from any gatherings that promote the intermingling of sexes. We should also aim to choose our friends wisely and ensure

Universities

that only those who will lead us towards good and warn us against evil are included in our circle. Attaching ourselves to a pious, *kaamil* spiritual mentor will also prove to be extremely effective in building our artillery against such challenges.

Having personally attended and lectured at secular universities, I have experienced the difficulties that Muslims are faced with first hand. Some of the guidelines I have provided are mechanisms that aided me to completely change my lifestyle and attach myself to the Islamic way of life. I make dua that Allah (SWT) keeps me steadfast on *deen* and protects all Muslims from the *fitnahs* of the time.

Introduction

The Muslim Ummah finds itself at a crossroads: we have the largest number of Muslims throughout the history of Islam but as a nation we are at our weakest point. Many have questioned why it is that despite our apparent wealth, knowledge and access to resources we are unable to progress nor stand up to our enemies. The answer to this question is very simple: we have Muslim names and identities but we do not live our lives as Muslims should.

The scariest part of it is that there is a significant gap in religion between older and younger generations. We appear to be, on the brink of the point where the death of our elders will mean the death of the beautiful Islam they brought with them from different parts of the world. Islam in our lives is dying because the younger generation are not prepared to live their lives as Muslims. They are influenced by a foreign lifestyle at school and university, and we as parents have done little to assist in protecting or preparing them for such difficulties.

Take the simple example of a young Muslim accountant who was able to obtain a job in the late 1970's. The laws of apartheid were so strict and the non white community so marginalised that it was an achievement for an individual of colour to get a qualified job at all. It meant that he or she was indeed quite intelligent. Now that they

obtained the job, they were expected to work long hours, often at the expense of their *salaah*. At this point they faced a choice: do I raise the issue of *salaah* with my employer in this completely non Muslim environment or do I keep quiet, remained satisfied with my job and placidly make all my *qada* once I get home?

While one empathises with the difficulty of practising one's *deen* in such a difficult environment, if we understand the thought process we went through as a community to rationalise the obvious choice the said accountant made, we can begin to understand how we have ended up where we are today. Over time that *qada* *salaah* was omitted completely, the Islamic dress code was seen as something completely foreign, our women lost their bashfulness and *deen* was removed from our hearts.

This resulted in a new generation of Muslims being bred – the generation that have Muslim names, attended Muslim schools and *madarasahs*, can recite the quran and sometimes even speak Arabic, yet they are a generation who do not believe in Islam within their hearts.

My analysis may appear to be extremely pessimistic and degrading of the progress we have made in the last twenty to fifty years. I concede to the fact that perhaps not everyone can be painted with the same brush. We definitely have a strong sector of the community that really do have the deep hearted love for *deen* and we also have those who are really trying to become good Muslims. At the same time there are still a sufficient number of Muslims that don't even pray *salaah* on a daily basis and this, in my humble opinion, is sufficient for us to declare a state of emergency.

It is my aim in this discourse to simply highlight some of the challenges that Muslims face at tertiary institutions today so that those that are intending to attend them, those who are there and the parents of these children are aware of what to prepare themselves for before wholeheartedly encouraging their offspring to jump into such a dangerous environment. It is also my humble aim to try and provide some guidelines for these people in an effort to try and preserve the

Universities

imaan of our brothers and sisters at campus. I am not a knowledgeable *aalim* or Muslim scholar. I am simply a product of the secular system and tertiary institutions in South Africa who wishes to try and contribute in an insignificant way to the upliftment of our community.

Why should I obtain an education?

This is the first question we should be asking ourselves when deciding to go to university. Every action of ours in Islam has some purpose which should be of benefit to us. The benefit is not only restricted to this world but extends to that of the *akhirah*. We must also ensure that our actions do not prejudice our *akhirah*.

Most students seem to go to university with the aim of obtaining an education that will grant them a good income. While there is no problem in using the education as a means of earning our livelihood, our *yakeen* must not be that our earnings depends on our education. Our purpose for going to university should be to increase our knowledge so that we are of benefit to the Muslim *ummah* and to ourselves. Our purpose should be to propagate the beautiful Islamic lifestyle to all the non Muslims we will come into contact with on campus and eventually in the workplace.

The issue of females attending university

I am not an *aalim* nor am I a religious scholar and so I will steer decidedly clear of attempting to issue a fatwa on the permissibility of allowing females to attend a campus. I encourage you to engage your local *ulema* on the issue and follow their guidelines with utmost conviction for they are the protectors of our *izzat* and respect. I am simply going to contextualise the situations facing females on campus in an effort to make your decision, as a female or parent of a daughter, a little more informed.

Universities

I have chosen to deal with this issue early on in this text as I believe that I need to highlight the importance of women in our society and how we have completely lost sight of their value. Unlike the west who claim to market the highest level of women's rights, we as Muslims truly cherish and honour our women. We do this because we believe that they are the nucleus of society and that no community can be productive unless their women are properly treated. This is because the female fulfils the all important role of the mother that nurtures and brings up a child.

It is sad that we are plunging our beloved sisters into such treacherous environments without even batting an eyelid. Perhaps it is because we are unaware of the extremely daunting challenges facing women at campuses. I will attempt to discuss the general challenges facing all Muslims at universities later on but will mention a few here in context. Universities have become the hotbed of *zina* of late. In my view, the only place where *zina* is more openly committed is in nightclubs, escort agencies and establishments of the like. Men and women intermingle freely at universities and, unlike the workplace, are not bound by unwritten boundaries and respect for the colleague. In fact there is an underlying encouragement for them to freely interact with each other often with the open hope of pursuing some kind of a relationship. We as Muslims should not become a part of such *fitnahs* nor should we be the cause of them.

I would like to bring to your attention an incident that occurred at one of the campuses not so long ago. An extremely intelligent, young Muslim female who had outstanding schooling results got married and went to study at a university. She was enrolled to study an extremely complex degree while her husband was studying at another campus. Despite being happily married she ended up falling in love with another Muslim boy at university. After a long, painful and difficult affair, Allah (SWT) blessed them both with *hidayat* and they decided to break off the relationship. Nevertheless imagine how hurt the husband would feel if he knew that his wife had engaged in an intimate relationship with another man during their marriage?

Universities

The second issue is our weakness as Muslims to follow *shariah* to its fullest. If we were to assume that it were permissible from a *shariah* point of view for females to attend a campus, we must realise that the laws of *hijaab* and *pardah* which we are so hesitant to adopt still remain a necessity. With so many *ghair mahrams* ogling after our females, how can we allow ourselves to go to such environments in a manner that attracts more attention. It boils down to the fact that we are often too weak in our present mindset to withstand such challenges. A newly rehabilitated alcoholic does not go freely into a bar. He has recognised his weakness and does not profess to be stronger than he is. We too must recognise our inability to follow the *shariah* and if so, stay away from such hotbeds of *fitnah*.

One of the things that often happens to our sisters on campus is that their outlook on life begins to change. Instead of focusing on ultimately bringing up pious children and fulfilling the role of the mother and wife in a household, they sometimes tend to become attracted to a corporate lifestyle. Given their intelligence and abilities, they will naturally flourish in their careers, sometimes more than men. However, they are then unable to adequately deal with the home affairs and the children and the family will ultimately become neglected. It is impossible for anyone to say that a woman who leaves the home at 7am and returns at 6pm can provide the necessary love and care for her family.

In this section I am not trying to purport that females should remain completely uneducated. We are fortunate that today it is possible to obtain different forms of education in a manner that is completely within the bounds of *shariah*. There are online courses, correspondence universities, *madrasahs* and a vast array of literature in many languages. Those who feel it is necessary to attend university must remain extremely vigilant of the laws of the *shariah* when going to such environments.

The challenges facing youth on campus

The young and old around the world are facing a myriad of challenges. Never before have we been attacked as a human race on so many fronts. The quickening pace of life has meant the speeding up of the difficulties that we are faced with. Within a short space of time our society has advanced tremendously leaving behind a void of morality and modesty. The advancement we have seen in the last twenty years would have taken at least a century to complete in the middle ages. Unfortunately man's emotional state of being and ability to withstand such advancement has not kept up with the pace of change.

Secularism

Naturally these challenges are magnified within the campus environment where individuals are encouraged to experiment and explore. The most basic challenge facing our youth on campus is the silent yet penetrating indoctrination that I choose to dub as secularism. Obviously this process begins much earlier in the schooling career of a child, but its essence is solidified within the confines of the campus.

Students are subconsciously brainwashed to believe that they need the degree to obtain a job, they need a job to earn, they need to earn to eat and they need to eat to live. From a conservative Islamic perspective the only true statement is that one needs to eat to live. The earning, the job and the money to eat are all provided for and decreed by Allah (SWT). Therefore the *yakeen* or faith that we end up placing in the degree is in fact contradictory to the teachings of Islam. The degree is simply a means of earning *rizq* and is not the source.

Immorality and Immodesty

Islam is a very pure and perfect way of life. Every aspect of Islam is characterised by *hayaa* and modesty. Even the manner of relieving one's self is covered by a sense of modesty. This is very different to the secular understanding of modesty. In fact, the campus environment traditionally boasts little or no modesty whatsoever.

One of the main avenues through which immorality is manifested is the student's dress code. People are encouraged to dress in a certain manner in order to follow the trends of fashion. Most of these trends are western, unIslamic trends that completely violate the laws of *shariah*. Those who choose not to abide by these "fashion code" are frowned upon and seen as extremists.

The idea of following a trend is contrary to the Muslim's motivation behind dressing. A Muslim should firstly be dressing in a manner that is completely within the bounds of the *shariah*. Thereafter the aim should be to try to follow the *sunnah* and to maintain the Muslim identity. It is sad that one is unable to distinguish the Muslim from the non Muslim while walking on campus as both have the same kind of appearance. Many times I have been unsure as to whether to make *salaam* to a person or greet them with a "good morning" as I could not identify whether they were Muslim.

Apart from the modesty of dress, the campus environment encourages a manner of behaviour that is completely devoid of any sense of modesty. Students tend to behave very flirtatiously with all members of the opposite sex, irrespective of whether it is done with romantic intentions or not. As Muslims we need to be extremely conscious of the manner in which we interact with each other, especially members of the opposite sex. Not only should we have no unnecessary contact with members of the opposite sex but the contact that we are forced to engage in must be very restrained and restricted.

I would like to draw the attention of the parents at this point. You may send your children dressed appropriately and expect them to behave with decorum but you will often find that while their outer

garb is Islamic, their interactions with the opposite sex are completely out of sync. I would also like to draw the attention of my young brothers and sisters on campus. It may seem fun and enjoyable to “innocently” flirt with your colleague, but bear in mind that the boundaries of *shariah* do not only extend to your beard or scarf but imbibe your complete character as well. You of all people should be protecting the *hayaa* of your fellow Muslims and by you becoming the counterparty to the flirting, you are injuring their *hayaa* as well.

I was personally witness to an incident where a girl from an extremely conservative and pious home was sent to a distant university to pursue an education. While there she fell in love with someone and began pursuing a relationship with him. This girl who all her life was modestly dressed, prayed her salaah five times a day and sometimes even woke up for *tahajjud* ended up in a situation where she used to sleep over in the same bed as her boyfriend every night. It is not that she was inherently evil or disrespectful of Islam but she was simply unable to manage the freedoms afforded to her at the university.

The thread of immorality breeds a culture of complete shamelessness. It is not uncommon for Muslim students today to be found in the most raucous of night clubs, freely consuming alcohol and drugs. In fact the situation is so dire that it is my estimation that at least 1 in 3 Muslim students are on or have experimented with drugs. I was recently invited for supper by some Muslim brothers who studied with me on campus. I was bewildered to find that they were consuming alcohol freely, as though it were a soft drink, in my presence despite the fact that I had on Islamic garb.

Alcoholism amongst the youth is going to prove to be an extremely dangerous weapon. It may give one an adrenalin rush to indulge in such activities while one is young, but the effects are far reaching. Alcohol is a lifestyle substance that is extremely difficult to give up. I have many friends who have made *tawba* and changed their lives but continue to have severe urges to indulge in drinking. Every time they

are exposed to alcohol in the slightest way, they find it extremely difficult to resist the temptation.

Using the name of Islam to promote haraam

Shaytaan is the cleverest member of the university community. He is a master of all fields of education, especially the one that can be used to create *fitnah* in the hearts of Muslims. Today we find a number of impermissible activities being carried out under the name of Islam. Students and parents are duped into thinking that they are engaging in some action of *ibadah* by participating in such activities when in actual fact they are becoming the sharp instruments of *shaytaan*.

One such area is that of Muslim student organisations that claim to represent the interests of Muslim students on campus. While the intention is noble, we find that the method is often riddled with flaws. There is open intermingling and flirting between members of the opposite sex to the extent that marriages have taken place and been broken within such organisations. On the other hand *salaah* is often neglected in order to host some events. It is vital that we question our motives when joining such organisations and that we ensure that we do not become vehicles for perpetrating *haraam* under the banner of Islam.

The campus environment has also become the hotbed for the propagation of deviant sects that claim to be within the fold of Islam. I am sure you will be surprised to note that most campuses have a large population of shia's, ahmadiyas, ismailis and other such deviant bodies. Their main aim is to use the campus environment to alter the faith of members of the Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah and they are proving to be extremely successful. In most cases they propagate their views under clouded banners so that we are not aware of who they really are.

A very great *Sheikh* and *Wali* of the time mentioned in one of his *dars* that the weapon *shaytaan* uses when leading Muslims towards acts of *bidat* (innovation) is far more deadly than other open sins. The

reason for this is that the individual committing the open sin is aware that what he is doing is incorrect. The *bidati* on the other hand, believes that what he is doing is in the name of Islam and it is extremely difficult for him accept the truth. In a similar manner we are sometimes duped into thinking that the activities we are participating in are Islamic.

Guidelines for the youth on campus

Having spent a bit of time dwelling on the challenges we face as youth on campus, I think it important to provide some practical tips which I have found to be extremely beneficial in making the most out of your campus experience. Remember that making the most out of life does not entail having the biggest party but rather ensuring that our lives are lived in such a way that we maximise our benefits for the *akhirah*..

Salaah

How heart shattering it is to see the pitiable state of *salaah* in the life of youngsters today. This is the pinnacle of our faith, the core of our daily being and the instant source of direct communication with our Allah. Yet we find that amongst the majority of young people today the only *salaah* they perform is the *Jumma salaah*. And even in the performance of *Jumma salaah* we rarely actually make it in time for the all important *khutbah*.

In my limited and humble experience I firmly believe that it is near impossible to experience any spiritual development without the presence of *salaah*. Do not fool yourself into thinking that it is not a necessity and that you will start to perform it when you are older.

Salaah must be performed with utmost regularity on a daily basis. I have noticed a number of students who generally perform all their *salaah* and neglecting it while on campus because they feel it is too difficult to do so or that their friends may not approve. We are

fortunate nowadays that most of our campuses have state of the art salaah facilities for both men and women including facilities for *wudu*. We should express our gratitude for such bounties by making full use of them during their appointed times.

Lowering the Gaze

This is one of the most challenging bits of advice I will give you but it is the singular one that will give you the sweetest effect on the heart. There is no doubt in *deen* that men should not have any interaction with strange women and vice versa. For the sake of clarity let me state that this includes gazing at members of the opposite sex. In fact in today's environment this uncontrolled gazing has become extremely dangerous.

In the initial stages it will be extremely difficult. We are so used to gaping at everyone in an unconcerned manner that we fail to even realise that what we are doing is such a great sin. At the same time once the intention is made to lower the gaze, Allah (SWT) puts the understanding in your heart and mind every time a member of the opposite sex walks past.

A pious *wali* has given a beautiful set of advice with regards to lowering the gaze. It is narrated that Allah (SWT) grants the sweetness of *iman* to the individual that lowers their gaze. The person mentioned that every time you are faced with such a situation you should lower your gaze and make a pact with Allah (SWT) that you are restraining yourself for His pleasure and so you are requesting that He grants you the sweetness that is promised. The effect of this is that you are motivated to continually lower your gaze and at the same time you are increasing your *zikr* by remembering to take Allah (SWT)'s name.

Another great *aalim* once mentioned in one of his *bayaans* that it is his personal experience that when a person lowers their gaze from members of the opposite sex and makes a dua at that time, there is a very great chance of that dua being immediately accepted.

Planning your day effectively

Islam is a comprehensive way of life that not only governs outward acts of worship such as *salaah* and fasting but it guides us in all aspects towards a balanced, healthy and harmonious existence. The daily ritual worship of *salaah* at its fixed time is a clear example of the structured day of a Muslim. A Muslim does not live their lives in a haphazard manner choosing to wake up and go to bed based on their own desires. The system of Allah (SWT) is such that it regulates the daily pattern of a Muslim to ensure that they maintain a healthy lifestyle and are able to get the most out of their day.

Adopting your five daily *salaah* is also the first step towards inculcating time management skills within your life. Whatever it is you need to do during the day, you will be aware that you need to make logistical and mental preparations to perform your *salaah* at its affixed time.

We find at present that one of the biggest challenges the youth face when it comes to their academic studies is that of time management. On a macro level they find it difficult to get through all their required course material on a daily basis and are often behind when it comes to their lectures and tutorials. This extends to their study patterns where they are unable to cover all the coursework before an exam and are often forced to “spot” certain sections of work. Once they get into the exam their technique is so poor that a large majority aren’t even able to attempt all of the questions in the paper.

This should not be an issue in the life of a Muslim. In fact we should have such good time management skills that we will be able to fit other activities into our days as well. If we look at our *akaabir ulema* and the number of activities they managed to participate in over and above their daily jobs, we will be baffled. And this was in a time when they did not have the luxuries of cars, planes and mobile telecommunications. The number of detailed books of *fiqh* and *Hadith* etc that they managed to pour through and churn out is beyond our imagination. The biggest lesson we should take from their example is that the *barakat* they had in their time was as a result of the level of *taqwa* and piety they had in their time was as a result

of the level of *taqwa* and piety they had in their lives. Similarly, if we are prepared to inculcate even a fraction of their *taqwa* into our lives, we will find that we will have sufficient time to obtain two or three degrees at the same time.

I haven't devoted an entire chapter to the topic as I believe there is sufficient literature out there that covers it in detail, but it is imperative for me to touch on what I believe is one of the biggest "time wasters" of our current environment: the television. We claim to be so sick and tired of *ulema* harping on about the topic of the television that we tend to switch off whenever it is mentioned. I will have you note that from my own personal experience and that of many others in the same position, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind whatsoever that the *barakat* in time is taken away as a result of the effects of the television.

Apart from the filth, alcohol, pornography, music and immorality that we bring into our living rooms and bedrooms through the television, I want to highlight the amount of time it wastes. Not only does it absorb time like a dry sponge, but it is time spent in utter futility. A very small fraction of people watch programmes on television about wildlife or the environment which can be termed as permissible.

There is a new fad that has enveloped our community and that is the watching of "series" or sitcoms. The availability of the internet and satellite television enables us to download hours and hours of sitcoms that we sit and watch for days on end

Islam is a religion that promotes usefulness and productivity. We often argue that we need a break from our studies and we need to "chill" and watch some television to relax our minds. Islam does not ignore the need for relaxation but it must be within the bounds of *shariah* and more importantly it must be beneficial to the individual. A run in the park is a means of relaxation that is also good for the physical health of the body. A swim in the pool or ocean is relaxing and fun and is also rejuvenating for one's health.

Universities

The issue of productivity brings me to the point of our sleeping patterns. Teenagers and young people in general tend to have very erratic sleeping patterns. It is mostly characterised by sleeping very late at night and waking up in the early afternoon. This is both extremely unhealthy and contrary to the *Sunnah*. In my early years on campus I was part of the crazy crowd that only got to bed in the early hours of the morning and rarely rose before the sun was at its peak. Not only did I miss fajr *salaah* but I found that I had very little *barakah* in my daily activities.

In my later years at university I began rising at fajr time and beginning my day shortly thereafter. I found that I was able to get much more out of the day, both academically and spiritually. I also found my relationship with my family improving and began feeling much healthier.

Therefore I would advise all my young friends to try and get to bed soon after *esha* if there is nothing constructive keeping you awake beyond this point. You will find that the majority of sinful acts are perpetrated in the dark hours of the night and so you should try and keep yourself away from them by being safely tucked in bed. If you follow this prescription you will also be able to wake up for *fajr* without much difficulty.

The last issue I wish to touch on when it comes to wasting one's time is the fad of MXit and Facebook. I acknowledge that technology has a number of benefits and facilities such as MXit and Facebook are extremely cost effective, high tech means of communication that can be used in constructive ways. Unfortunately they open the door to a flood of *fitnah* wherein the previously restricted young person is now able to free themselves of all forms of supervision. Open flirting, compromising pictures and numerous illicit relationships are the order of the day in such environments. There is no way for parents to even monitor their child's behaviour in such domains short of giving them a cellphone that does not support such features. And perhaps this is the best alternative for parents in this day age. If we are to use the argument that children need cellphones in the event of an

emergency, we should be prepared to allow them to use only the simplest types of phones that allow them to make and receive calls without giving them access to such dangerous platforms. The advice of our pious *ulema* in the face of such addictions is for young people to get rid of the high tech phones and replace them with simple ones so that they are not tempted to use them in the wrong manner.

Choosing your friends

We have heard many times how the person who befriends a blacksmith will have the smell of dust and smoke on him while he who befriends a perfume seller will always have a fragrant smell about him. The choice of our friends is vital in developing our spirituality.

Let me give you a brief example. There was a young student on campus who was somewhat pious in that he was concerned about his *salaah* and he upheld the general articles of faith in his daily life. He had a bunch of friends who were heavily involved in drugs and partying. While he himself never attended any of these parties, he occasionally took some drugs and every now and again missed a *salaah* or two.

After some time his friends happened to move away from the city and within weeks, he found his spiritual development increasing rapidly. Those acts of worship which he was carrying out previously became more sincere and he now had the time to increase them manifold. He also found it too much effort to purchase and consume drugs on his own so he no longer took any drugs. His relationship with his parents and spouse improved and shortly thereafter his life went through a complete Islamic revolution. If you have to ask him what brought on the change in his life he will reply that one of the key ingredients was not having the effect of bad company in his life.

In reality our choice of friends should be motivated by their ability to increase our *iman*. We should be looking for friends that have higher levels of spirituality than us and who can lead us towards good actions. The best choice a person can make in choosing good

company is to attach themselves to a spiritual mentor. While it is possible to increase one's spirituality individually, the treacherous challenges facing the youth today make it extremely difficult. A sound, pious and sincere spiritual mentor will provide the right direction in assisting one to make some progress.

In conclusion I would like to highlight the issue of a spiritual mentor as the starting point for the reformation of all my brothers and sisters out there who want to clean up their lives. I could not have escaped the deathly dangers of the campus environment without the guidance and *duas* of my *Sheikh* who assisted in connecting me with Allah (SWT). I make *dua* that Allah (SWT) grants him a long life and continues to give him the strength to always make the *khidmat* of *deen*. I suggest that you make a concerted effort to find someone like this and attach yourself to them as a means of protection and benefit.

Conclusion

It was my intention to keep this discourse brief and to the point. I hope that I have managed to highlight some of the dire challenges facing the youth on campus. My advice to all students, potential students and parents of students is to think very carefully about the type of environment characterised by the university. Attending a university is a very big step in life and can have a huge impact in the way your life will ultimately pan out. I may have focussed more on the difficulties and challenges facing campus students. There are definitely many pros to attending a university or tertiary institution and the benefits to you and your community will be great. You must however be aware of the challenges you will face as a Muslim in order to prepare yourself adequately to withstand them. No benefit can outweigh your eternal salvation and this should always remain the focus of our lives.

May Allah (SWT) give us all the *tawfiq* to be the best of Muslims.